

EDUCATION & LABOR COMMITTEE
Congressman George Miller, Chairman

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**Chairman Miller Statement at Committee Mark-Up of H.R. 3200,
the America's Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *Below are the prepared remarks of U.S. Rep. George Miller (D-CA), the chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee, for a committee mark-up of H.R. 3200, the America's Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009.*

The committee meets this morning to begin marking up historic legislation that will guarantee that all Americans access to quality, affordable health care.

No one can argue that our nation's current health care path is sustainable.

Premiums and health care costs have skyrocketed for families, businesses and governments.

Americans with insurance are increasingly concerned that their employer will scale back coverage or drop it altogether. They're also terrified about what happens if they lose their job.

Families often have to fight insurance companies who routinely deny coverage and delay treatment based on a pre-existing condition.

And, the 47 million uninsured are threatening the health of our nation and adding unsustainable costs on everyone else.

All of these factors have driven the system out of control – for families, businesses and our nation's fiscal future.

The America's Affordable Health Choices Act, H.R. 3200, will set a new, more sustainable course. It will end these abuses and ensure that all American will never have to worry about losing their coverage.

This bill reflects years of an open and collaborative process.

It reflects the input from all our colleagues and over 70 witnesses the three committees of jurisdiction have heard from at hearings since releasing our discussion draft three weeks ago.

The America's Affordable Health Care Act embraces the desires of the American people and meets the goals articulated by President Obama – to lower costs, preserve choice, and expand access to quality, affordable care.

It fixes what's broken and builds on what works in our current system.

It addresses our nation's economic and fiscal health by reducing costs.

We've made two things clear from the start.

One, health reform is fundamental to ensuring our long-term fiscal health.

And two, we must be responsible and pay for these reforms rather than pass the costs on to future generations as has been done by previous Congresses and previous Administrations when enacting significant legislation.

Now a lot of attention has already been drawn to the surcharge portion of our bill that would pay for about half the cost of our reforms.

I want to remind people that under our bill only the highest earning 1.2 percent of American households – those earning over \$280,000 for an individual or \$350,000 for a family – would pay a surcharge. That leaves 98.8 of American households who would not pay any surcharge at all.

But I believe this bill will ultimately draw greater attention for what Americans will get in return for this investment.

Let me be specific about what our bill means for average Americans:

Our Bill Will Lower Costs For Health Care

- No more co-pays or deductibles for preventive care.
- No more rate increases because of a pre-existing condition, gender, or occupation.
- An annual cap on out-of-pocket expenses.
- Guaranteed, affordable dental, hearing and vision care for children.

Our Bill Will Provide Choice Of Care

- You can keep your doctor and current plan if you like them.
- Your choices will be protected and enhanced. You will have access to a wide variety of choices for quality and affordable plans, including a high-quality public health insurance option to compete with private insurers.

Our Bill Will Increase Quality Of Care

- You and your doctors make health care decisions – not insurance companies.
- More family doctors and nurses will be able to enter the workforce, guaranteeing access to better treatment that meets patients' needs.

Our Bill Will Offer Stability And Peace Of Mind

- Never again will Americans go without health insurance.
- You will never lose coverage if they lose a job or switch jobs.
- You will never be denied coverage because of a pre-existing condition.
- And you won't face any lifetime limits on how much insurance companies will pay – meaning you will never again be one treatment away from bankruptcy.

Our reforms will cover 97 percent of Americans by the year 2015.

Contrary to opponents' claims that employer-based coverage will drop, CBO estimates that our bill will actually increase employer provided care.

CBO also estimates that 30 million Americans will get their health care through the exchange in 2019 and that two-thirds of those people would choose private plans.

Not only will the bill before us today provide peace of mind to all Americans struggling to pay for health coverage, it will also drive down costs for our government and businesses.

In addition to the revenues our bill will raise, it will directly save \$500 billion in future outlays of Medicare and Medicaid through reforms that change our system from one that is based on quantity of health care to one that is based on actual quality.

The current system rewards prescribing unnecessary tests and more invasive medical procedures. This directly increases costs we all bear and increases the chances of medical errors.

In fact, the Center for American Progress just released a report that calculates that our nation spends \$700 billion a year on waste and inefficient care.

That's why our bill, along with investments made in the Recovery Act, will ensure that health spending is based on outcomes and not utilization.

Our nation's future economic competitiveness depends on real health care reform. Businesses are less competitive because of skyrocketing health care costs.

As a result, we see companies freeze hiring, shift more costs onto employees, and even ending coverage because of rising costs.

Real health reform will not only save jobs, but also create millions of new careers. There will be millions of new customers looking for primary care clinics, doctors and nurses.

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Over the next two days, our committee will be marking up the areas of this legislation that are in our jurisdiction, including employers' responsibility for providing health care and the health exchange.

I look forward to what I'm sure will be a vigorous debate on these provisions.

But let me just acknowledge how far we have come. We have taken another monumental step in our journey to finally fix our broken health care system.

I am confident that we will get our bill passed in the House, on schedule, by the August district work period.

Let me just end by saying again that we must and we will continue to move forward. If there is one thing that is 'off of the table' it is saying 'no' to health care reform.

The American people have waited and suffered long enough. On behalf of them, and the future of our country, it's time to make this year the year that we finally deliver on our promise to reform our health care system.

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